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AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC

FOR A BUILDING FUND

FOR THE

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN.

At a Special Meeting of the Executive Committee of the STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN, which was largely attended, held at the Society's Rooms, Madison, August 5th, 1862, Hon. H. S. ORTON was called to the chair.

The following Communication was read by the Secretary:

MADISON, July 23d, 1862.

LYMAN C. DRAPER, Esq.,

Soc'y State Hist. Society.

DEAR SIR:—I desire, through you, to present to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, a suitable site for the erection of a proper building to meet the wants of the Society. The site that I propose to donate, is forty (40) by one hundred (100) feet, on the north-west corner of block seventy-three (73) in the city of Madison, being the corner north-east of the Court House.

The conditions of the above donation being as follows: The possession of the ground shall remain in myself until the expiration of the leases at present upon it, say until the 1st day of July, 1864, and thereafter until the Society is ready to commence the erection of a building thereon, of which I shall have thirty days notice; and the further condition, that the Society shall commence and prosecute the erection of a building, so far as to get it enclosed, within five years from the date hereof. I will pay all taxes on the property until the Society takes possession upon the terms above stated.

Respectfully submitted,

SIMEON MILLS.

Letters urging the necessity of a fire-proof building were read from F. A. Laplante, the President of the Society, and from Vice Presidents Gen. W. R. Smith, and James Sutherland. The whole subject, on motion, was referred to the Committee on Building Lot, of whom were present, Messrs. Draper, D. Atwood, J. T. Clark and Tibbits.

The Committee, after full conference, reported a series of resolutions, through Mr. Draper, which after slight amendment, were unanimously adopted as follows:

1. That the Executive Committee, in behalf of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, hereby gratefully accept, with the conditions imposed, the generous tender by Gen. Simeon Mills, of a convenient, appropriate and valuable lot in this city, forty by one hundred feet in size, upon which to erect a suitable building to meet the growing wants of the Society.

2. That the Society hereby pledges its faithful efforts to raise a fund of not less than twenty thousand dollars, for the erection of a plain and substantial fire-proof edifice, of not less than forty by eighty feet in size, to be commenced before the close of the year 1866, and sufficiently completed for occupancy by the close of the year 1867; and should there be any surplus, it shall be faithfully invested for the increase, maintenance, and support of the Society.

3. That pledges in the form of negotiable notes, without interest if paid when due, and payable in five equal annual installments, be secured as soon as possible, by solicitors appointed by this Board—said notes not to be valid, or of binding force, until their aggregate sum amounts to eight thousand dollars.

4. That this Board, at this meeting, elect or appoint, and the new Board in January of each year proceed to elect or appoint, five responsible members of this Society to serve as Trustees, whose duty it shall be to take charge of the Building Fund as fast as collected, and place it on safe deposit, drawing such reasonable interest as they may be able to secure, until needed for its specific purpose—or, until by direction of the Executive Committee, it be otherwise invested, as contingently provided for by the next following resolution.

5. That in case the pledges and collections therefrom, should be deemed insufficient by

the Executive Committee for the erection of a suitable building, the amounts collected may, by majority vote of the Committee, be vested by the Trustees, or a majority of them, in the stocks of the United States, or of the State of Wisconsin, and, with the accumulations of interest, be sacredly held, until the same by increment or addition shall, in the opinion of a majority of the Executive Committee, at some stated, or at a special meeting called for that purpose, be deemed and declared sufficient therefor.

6. That a pledge is hereby solemnly made in behalf of the Society, that the money and means thus raised shall be inviolably applied in the above manner and in no other, and that no debt shall thereby be incurred or remain against the Society; and that the Executive Committee shall take such steps, at the proper time, as shall be sufficient in the law to vest the building and estate thereby acquired in the Trustees, to hold the same, without incumbrance, for the uses of the Society; and in case the amount raised shall prove more than sufficient for erecting the building, the surplus shall be likewise vested in the Trustees, to be inviolably held for the stated maintenance and support of the Society.

7. That such sums as may be contributed towards the Building Fund shall be credited to such of the donors as may desire it, as so much towards the requisite Five Hundred Dollars to constitute them LIFE DIRECTORS of the Society, and consequently members of the Executive Committee during their natural lives; and those who contribute not less than fifty dollars for this purpose, shall be constituted HONORARY MEMBERS, with all the privileges of the Society for life.

8. That when such pledges are paid, a complete list of the names and residence of the donors to the Building Fund be entered in a neatly bound book, to be permanently preserved on exhibition in the Library, with a photograph or engraving of each donor, with autograph, attached; and that such list be published, from time to time, in the public press, and in the next succeeding volume of the Society's Collections—so that all the contributors to this object may thus ever be held in grateful remembrance as public benefactors.

9. That any further necessary arrangements with reference to a building site, securing a Building Fund, or providing for the erection of the edifice, will be promptly made by the Executive Committee, whose special duty it is, under the eleventh article of the Constitution governing us, "to supervise and direct the financial and business concerns of the Society."

Hon. Simon Mills, Hon. H. S. Orton, Hon. G. B. Smith, J. Adler Ellis, and John D. Gurnee, were chosen Trustees for the current year, in accordance with the fourth of the preceding resolutions.

Solicitors were appointed for the several

counties of the State, to obtain pledges for the Building Fund.

Mr. Draper, from the Committee to whom the subject of site and building was referred, reported an *Appeal to the Public for a Building Fund*, which was referred to Messrs. Draper, Hyer, and Durrie, with instructions to have such number printed as may be necessary, and to perfect all needful arrangements for carrying the plan of soliciting aid for the Building Fund fully into effect.

Adjourned.

AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC IN BEHALF OF A BUILDING FUND.

It is now over thirteen years since the State Historical Society of Wisconsin had its origin; but from its re-organization, over eight years ago, it dates, in fact, the beginning of its real growth and prosperity. Since January, 1854, the Library has increased from fifty volumes to over sixteen thousand volumes and pamphlets—so that it now ranks, in point of size, as the fourth or fifth in the Union, of a purely Historical or Antiquarian character.

While the Society, with commendable singleness of purpose, has hitherto devoted its means and efforts exclusively to the establishment of a public Library commensurate with the wants of an intelligent and inquiring people, in a rapidly expanding country, it has, thus far, done nothing towards securing a fire-proof edifice for the preservation of its precious collections of historical and scientific literature, except from time to time to call attention to the subject in its annual reports. But such has been the increase of the Library and collections, already compactly filling a room 45 by 65 feet in size, significantly admonishing us that further accommodations will soon become a prime necessity,—and all the while exposed to loss by the accidents of fire—that we are forced to the conclusion, that a fire-proof building is now the pressing want of the Society.

Kindred societies and similar collections have already suffered by the calamities of fire.—The Library and Cabinet of the Iowa Historical and Geological Institute, the fruit of ten years successful and pains-taking effort, became a prey to the flames, in 1853—800 volumes, several valuable files of Territorial newspapers, 5,000 pamphlets, 100 maps, 200 manuscripts, with a splendid collection of fossils and other specimens illustrative of the geology of the State, a fine herbarium of its indigenous plants, with many other specimens of its natural history, together with a cabinet of about 400 Indian relics, including the trappings of Black Hawk, were consigned to irretrievable destruction. In February, 1854, the splendid Parliament buildings at Quebec, with a portion of the Government Library and philosophical apparatus, together with all the paintings in the Council and Assembly chambers, were destroyed by fire originating from a furnace; while the Historical and Literary Society of Quebec, which had rooms in the

Parliament buildings, lost almost the whole of its twenty-three years gatherings, including its valuable Library and Museum—the latter alone estimated in value at over \$12,000—together with its 80 or 90 folio volumes of Records of the Realm, and a large collection of historical manuscripts. And, as a remarkable coincidence, on the 6th of January, 1857, about 7 o'clock in the evening, at the very hour when the annual report was being read before our Society, urging the necessity of a fire-proof building for the safety of its collections, the State House, at Montpelier, Vermont, with many valuable collections of the natural and civil history of that State, was totally destroyed by fire; and, among the property thus sacrificed by the devouring element, was the large collection of newspaper files which Mr. Henry Stevens, then President of the Vermont Historical Society, had been, we believe, forty or fifty years in bringing together. In 1847, the valuable Library of the Royal Society of Icelandic Literature, in Copenhagen, was destroyed by fire; the loss was peculiarly unfortunate, as the Library contained more than two thousand unpublished MSS., and a numerous collection of ancient Icelandic works. Only a few years since, a very large and valuable collection of Western newspaper files, and other printed matter, designed for the illustration of the civil and ecclesiastical history of the West, patiently gathered during a period of some thirty years, by the late Rev. Dr. John M. Peck, were destroyed by the burning of the building, at Rock Spring, Illinois, in which they were deposited.

We should be admonished by the destruction in whole, or in part, by fire, of public archives in this country on repeated occasions:—In New Hampshire in 1736; in Massachusetts in 1747, besides having been damaged by three previous fires; in New York in 1740–41, and in 1773; in New Jersey in 1686; in North Carolina in 1831; in South Carolina in 1698; the Capitol building, with the Territorial Library of Oregon, in 1855; the Capitol, public offices, and records, at Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1746; the Capitol of Kentucky, with many public records, several years since;—all of which were accidental; and in Virginia in 1781, by the British army under the fratricide Arnold. In 1849, the Parliament buildings at Quebec were fired by the torch of a furious mob, when the Government Library—esteemed one of the very best in North America—and a large portion of the archives of the Province, were destroyed; and these public buildings had scarcely been rebuilt, and a new Library collected, when by accident, in 1854, the devouring element again laid them waste.

Several times have the National archives suffered by conflagration—in 1800, when the buildings of the War Department were destroyed, and twice subsequently more or less injured; in 1814, when the British burned the public buildings, and destroyed the National

Library of 3,000 volumes, as well as many of the public archives; in 1833, when the Treasury buildings were burned; in 1836, when the General Post Office, and Patent Office were destroyed by fire, with almost their entire contents—including 7,000 models of patents, 163 large folio volumes of records, 26 large portfolios, containing 9,000 drawings, many of them beautifully executed and very valuable, and 10,000 original descriptions of inventions, with many other documents; and lastly, in 1851, when the Congressional Library was burned, occasioned by the timbers, which formed the alcoves being inserted in the chimney-flues, destroying 35,000 volumes of books, together with many valuable paintings, medals, and statuary. It is a significant fact, and evidence in point of the utility of fire-proof offices, that the valuable public records and documents in the two fire-proof rooms of the War Department in 1814, and those in the fire-proof rooms of the Treasury Department in 1833, were all saved, while most of the others were consumed.

Other public institutions and public Libraries have not escaped the devouring element. In 1705, the building, together with the Library and philosophical apparatus, of the College of William and Mary, at Williamsburg, Va., which had their origin in 1692, were destroyed by fire; and in Feb., 1859, the College buildings, College Library of 9,000 volumes, which had been one hundred and fifty-four years in collecting, together with the Laboratory, and a Society Library, were totally consumed. In 1758, the Providence Library, which had been nearly eighty years in collecting, was entirely consumed, except about seventy volumes loaned out; while the Charleston Library Society, out of between five and six thousand volumes, saved only one hundred and eighty-five from the flames of a disastrous fire in 1778, and many of these were volumes of mutilated sets. In 1856, the building of the Medical Department of the University of Louisville was destroyed by fire, and portions only of the Library and chemical apparatus were saved. In our own State, only a few years since, the building of the Platteville Academy, with its valuable Library, was destroyed by fire. Intelligence just reaches us from across the Atlantic, of the conflagration of the City Hall of Bordeaux, and perishing in its flames documentary evidence exhibiting eight hundred years of Gascon history, contained in many thousand autograph letters of kings, emperors, princes, governors, mayors, archbishops, and military commanders, relating to commerce, war, art, science, letters and navigation, for the past eight eventful centuries—together with a complete collection of the *Moniteur* newspaper, established as the organ of the French Government over one hundred years ago. Well may historical students deplore such stupendous and irreparable losses; and hence the pertinent question, more easily

asked, however, than answered—*Why was not better care taken of such inestimable collections?*

The same inquiry may, with equal propriety, be propounded to us, with reference to the Library and collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Look upon its shelves, and behold the priceless treasures there gathered together—the noble Gallery of Art, numbering nearly sixty oil paintings, of our battle fields, national heroes, statesmen, jurists, men of science and of letters, and our own State pioneers, many of them painted by superior artists, and of the most of these pictures no copies exist,—of the venerable newspaper files, nearly eight hundred in number, the oldest printed in 1680, and altogether covering almost the entire eventful period of over a century past, including a file of nearly nine years of the old *Pennsylvania Gazette*, published by Dr. Franklin, from 1755 to the close of 1763—a complete set of the Transactions of the Royal Society, London, beginning with its commencement in 1665, embracing one hundred and twelve volumes—works from the private libraries of Franklin, Clinton, Clay, and others—volumes of the original Jesuit Relations, and other French works on the North-West, published two centuries ago—curious maps and ancient pamphlets of the Great West of the last century—manuscripts of Sir William Johnson, at whose command a hundred years ago thousands of dusky warriors, some even from the then far-off regions of Wisconsin, would flock to the standard of King George—manuscripts of “the accursed Brant,” of Washington, Greene, Schuyler, Jefferson, Old Put, Ethan Allen, and Molly Stark, and many others—narratives of our own Wisconsin pioneers—historical curiosities from both worlds—many trophies of our own Wisconsin soldiers, and relics from the battle fields of the Southern rebellion—these, and many more, are every moment more or less exposed to the danger of fire.

Five Historical and Antiquarian Societies of the country have secured safe and commodious buildings for their libraries and collections, viz:

1. In 1819, at the private expense of Isaiah Thomas, the munificent founder of the American Antiquarian Society, a brick building was erected, at an expense of \$10,000, for the use of that institution. It was 40 by 50 feet in size, two stories high, with two wings, each 20 by 28 feet. After thirty years occupancy of this building, finding that the location produced dampness, and that enlarged accommodations were greatly needed, the Society made arrangements for a new building, which was completed in 1855, at a cost of \$18,000—of which its President, Hon. Stephen Salisbury, contributed \$5,000, and the site for the building. It is 50 by 80 feet in size, with a basement and main story, forty-two feet from the ground to the eaves. The Library numbers 26,000 volumes, and ample provision by alcoves and galleries is made for its future increase.

2. The New York Historical Society, the second institution of the kind founded in the country, was without a permanent abode of its own for over fifty years after its organization, its treasures subjected to frequent removals, and liable at all times, in their insecure places of deposit, to be destroyed by fire—and once meeting with a very narrow escape. “In 1847,” observes its President, Hon. Luther Bradish, “the New York Historical Society, then comparatively few in numbers, and feeble in pecuniary resources, but deeply impressed with the great and increasing value of its Library and collections, and with the danger to which they were exposed, took the incipient steps for the erection of a new fire-proof edifice, for the reception and preservation of that Library and those collections, and for the general accommodation of the Society. This enterprise, under the circumstances, might well, as it did, to the timid and even prudent, seem hardy. It was indeed bold. For the Society resolved upon an undertaking of great magnitude and importance, involving a large expenditure of money, without having in its treasury a single dollar for its achievement. But the Society relied upon the intelligence and known liberality of New York, in the confident belief that her public spirit would not permit an object of such conceded merit and of so great public concernment, to fail for want of the necessary means for its accomplishment. It was, therefore, determined that an appeal, accompanied by a statement of facts, should be made to the public generally, and to the friends of historical literature in particular, for aid in the accomplishment of this great object of general interest. Most nobly did the public of New York respond to this appeal.” A noble fire-proof edifice was, in due time, erected, the foundation fund for which was the generous bequest of five thousand dollars by Miss Elizabeth DeMilt, a benevolent maiden lady of that city. The total cost of the building alone was about \$70,000, and the site and furniture \$15,000 more. It was appropriately dedicated Nov. 3d, 1857, when the historian Bancroft and others took part in the interesting exercises. The Library numbers 25,000 volumes.

3. The Massachusetts Historical Society, the venerable pioneer of its kind, founded in 1791, purchased, in 1835, the upper portion of a large stone building, about 40 by 84 feet, and completed the purchase of the entire building in 1856, at a cost of \$35,000, and has fitted it up for its Library, Gallery, and collections—including a separate apartment for the splendid Dowse Library, the free-will gift of the late Thomas Dowse, numbering some 5,000 volumes of the choicest editions of the most desirable standard works in the English language. The Society and Dowse Libraries together number 13,000 volumes, 2,000 unbound pamphlets, and a Gallery of 70 portraits, mostly of New England worthies.

4. The Maryland Historical Society, found-

ed in 1843, erected, in 1848, in conjunction with two other Library societies, one of which has since transferred its book collections to the Historical Society, an elegant and commodious building, at a cost of over \$28,000. The Library proper of the Society in 1854 contained 2,123 volumes, of which over 300 were volumes of Gazettes, but the Baltimore Library, a miscellaneous collection, has since been transferred to the Society, bringing up the number of its Library to 15,000 volumes, with many manuscripts, and a Gallery of Fine Arts. The rooms of the Society are furnished in an elegant manner, with solid oak book-cases, tables, and chairs—the furniture alone being valued at \$8,000.

5. The Rhode Island Historical Society was founded in 1822. The State having made a grant of \$500, and having had a suitable lot donated for a building site, the Society was stimulated to raise a building fund which, after a few years, was increased to several thousand dollars, when, in 1844, a suitable stone edifice, 30½ by 50½ feet, was erected for the Society's Library and collections. The Library numbers 3,000 volumes, including many manuscripts, and valuable files of Rhode Island newspapers.

Other Historical Societies are moving in the same direction. That of Maine has received from the Legislature of that State a donation of land, which has been sold for \$6,000, to aid in the erection of a permanent edifice; the New Jersey Historical Society, founded in 1845, and having about 3,000 volumes, has commenced raising funds for a building; while the Minnesota Historical Society, founded a few months later than ours, has purchased a lot, and commenced securing pledges for the erection of a suitable edifice.

With such incentives before us—and several of them by institutions possessing less valuable collections than ours—ought we not to feel impelled to make an earnest effort to provide early and safe accommodations for the invaluable treasures committed to our charge, and which are imperiled every moment until a fire-proof building is secured for their preservation? If these were once destroyed, no labor or wealth of man could replace a tithe of them. And though we may estimate the total value of our Library and collections, in round numbers, at fifty thousand dollars, yet it is a difficult matter to properly estimate such collections by dollars and cents, when we bear in mind that many of the works could never be duplicated at any price. Some of the volumes have cost as high as sixty dollars, others twenty-five, and others twenty, while others, still, have not cost as many cents. Averaging such things, so totally unlike in value, should never be thought of; and estimating the value of a Library by the number of its volumes, would be about as correct as it would be to estimate its worth by its weight.

Milton has left us a suggestive admonition:

"As good almost kill a man, as kill a good book: who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature—God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye." If the destruction of a single good book involves such a loss, what should be thought of our criminality, if by our negligence, our niggardliness, or love of ease, we should permit a whole Library—the largest, with two exceptions, in the entire North West—to be constantly exposed to the dangers and vicissitudes of partial or wholesale destruction by fire? "A Library," says Beecher, "is not a luxury, but one of the necessities of life." As we feel it our incumbent duty to provide for the comfort, the health, and the safety of ourselves and loved ones, so should we make liberal provision for the safety and usefulness of our public libraries. They exert a silent but mighty influence upon the destinies of our race.

There are some who, without duly considering what is really needed to meet the present and prospective requirements of a Society like this, imagine that some suitable room in the new Capitol building might be secured for the purpose. The two wings—one completed, and the other soon to be so—can offer no spare room for this object; nor is there any prospect of other portions of the edifice being built within a reasonable time to meet our growing wants—and even if already erected, they could not afford rooms of sufficient capacity to accommodate the Society. When only eight years have transpired since the efficient re-organization of the Society, the rooms now so well filled, and which cover a space of 45 by 65 feet, with alcove accommodations, are already too limited for shelf-room, picture gallery, maps, and cabinet of curiosities, to say nothing of much needed rooms for Society meetings, for package and storage, and fuel and heating purposes. Besides, we need to be admonished by the destruction of the Quebec Historical Society, in consequence of the burning of the Canadian Parliament buildings, and of the newspaper and historical gatherings of Henry Stevens, by the burning of the Vermont State House, that such a collection as ours should have a building exclusively by itself, fire-proof throughout, and not rely upon Government buildings for cramped and uncertain quarters.

Pertinent to the subject under discussion, is the following extract of a letter from Hon. Henry S. Randall, formerly Secretary of State of New York, and author of a valuable and extended *Life of Jefferson*, and who, a few years since, presented our Society with one hundred rare and precious manuscript letters of the great chiefs of the Revolution, and proposed to make the Society the residuary legatee of a still larger collection of historical autographs: "But is one all-important thing attended to? Are you safe from fire? If not, some unpropitious day will leave your Society

and State plundered of these things which *can never be replaced!* If any member of your Society thinks it an easy thing to pick up these interesting remains of the past in the highway, let him go to work, and see how long it will take him to get together again only the one hundred letters I sent you! The chances are two to one, that he will fail, with all the time he chooses to take. It would be a work of the merest chance, to get them together again.—By all manner of means have a *fire-proof building*. Don't now look at size and splendor—but safety. A brick house in an isolated position, with iron shutters and shelves, could be constructed at a very moderate cost, if you *will only let the fancy work go*, and let *fancy* wait till the next generation. It can't be but your Legislature would make the necessary appropriation. If not, appeal to the public-spirited citizens of your State to raise the necessary means by subscription."

"I am greatly pleased," writes Gen. Wm. R. Smith, the venerable historian of Wisconsin, "to learn of the late acquisitions to the Society's Library. We daily feel the absolute necessity of a fire-proof building. Our valuable properties are now always exposed to accident, and we are never free from absolute danger. How desirable it is that we should be in a condition of safety! Perhaps now is the appointed time, and the generous offer of Gen. Mills will be the precursor of happy events for our much cherished Historical Society."

"I am glad to learn," writes our worthy President, I. A. Lapham, "that our Society is making such good progress in filling the Library with such valuable books and papers. Our collections are now certainly worthy of a better and more secure place of deposit. I hope the project to erect a fire-proof building may be carried out fully; and the thanks of the Society are due to Gen. Mills for his very liberal offer of a lot on which to erect it."

Hon. Cyrus Woodman, one of the Society's earliest and most steadfast friends, writes: "I am much pleased to hear that you are making an effort to secure the necessary means for the erection of a fire-proof building for the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Society has already a collection which is exceeded in value but by few similar collections in the country; and it is altogether too valuable to be exposed, as it now is, to destruction by fire, and the value is every year increasing."

"I should regard the loss of the Society's collections," writes Gen. James Sutherland, of Janesville, "as a calamity equal to that of the loss of all the State archives in the Capitol. It has occurred to me, that the State should do something, at least, towards this object; if not, let us, as soon as practicable, commence the erection of a building for that purpose." And in past years, such men as Timothy O. Howe, John B. Martin, Henry S. Baird, A. A. Townsend, and C. A. Stevens, have substantially

said: "Such a collection as that of our Historical Society, deserves a fire-proof edifice, and when the Society moves in the matter, we will gladly contribute towards so desirable an object."

The urgent necessity for a fire-proof edifice is sufficiently patent to all. The real question is not, therefore, whether such a building is needed, but whether adequate pledges for a Building Fund can be secured in such trying times as these, when the anxieties of all classes are so completely absorbed in the herculean efforts to quell the great Southern rebellion? A generous citizen of Madison,—and one of its pioneer settlers—Gen. SIMEON MILLS, has tendered the Society a valuable and suitable corner lot for a building site, provided the Society will erect thereon and enclose a proper building to meet its wants within five years; which offer has been gratefully accepted on the part of the Society, pledging its faithful efforts to raise the needful amount, in the form of notes, without interest, payable in five equal annual installments, and to commence the erection of the building before the close of 1866.

It is peculiarly creditable to a country and people to be willing and ready to make sacrifices for the public good in times of great national distress and calamity. Look at the sacrifices of Prussia! "Prussia," says Bancroft, "in the hour of its sufferings and its greatest calamities, renovated its existence partly by the establishment of schools." From 1806 until 1812, while at the mercy of Napoleon, the nation was stripped of its revenues, and even robbed of the income of the endowments of its literary and benevolent institutions, and the whole country literally oppressed and impoverished by its conquerors—yet it is the pride of Prussia, that at the time of her greatest humiliation and distress, her educational advancement, the founding of universities, seminaries, and other public institutions, never flagged for a single moment—the Government proclaiming, that they were "convinced that liberation from extraordinary calamities is fruitless, and only to be effected by a thorough improvement of the people's education."

Similar sacrifices were freely made by our Revolutionary fathers all through their perilous contest with the mother country. In the month of December, 1776, at one of the gloomiest and most critical periods of the war, when Philadelphia was threatened by the British, and just before Washington and his little band re-crossed the Delaware to attack the enemy at Trenton, the Pennsylvania Council of Safety, then assembled at Philadelphia, while almost literally in session day and night, meeting at 2 o'clock in the morning, providing arms, ammunition, blankets, clothing and provisions for the winter campaign, and hurrying forward new levies of troops—at this time, as the Council of Safety justly termed it, of "eminent public

danger," and a time too of the direst poverty of the people, they unanimously resolved to open the public schools, declaring that "the education of youth should be carried on as usual."

Such were the bright examples of the self-sacrificing spirit of our patriotic forefathers—examples all the more honorable as they shone forth so conspicuously at a period of such universal public gloom, and amid the wide-spread poverty and sufferings of a struggling people. It would seem, that in such times of great public calamity, men lose much of their ordinary selfish and sordid love of property,—perhaps, because, in part, of the precarious tenure by which it is held, but more particularly because of the powerful appeals the very times and circumstances make to their latent generous impulses—and thus, while liberally providing for the wants of their struggling country, they also provide for the education of their children, and the founding and maintenance of needful public institutions. Wealth and means thus consecrated, cannot but prove in a high degree beneficial to a grateful and appreciative people.

We now appeal to the friends of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for pledges for the building fund. Precious treasures have been committed to our charge, and the heroic devotion of the sons of Wisconsin on the battle-fields of the pending contest, are constantly bringing new additions to these historic stores, in the shape of narratives and trophies; and we are responsible to our predecessors, to the present generation, and to those who suc-

ceed us, for the faithful preservation of these priceless collections. "Trustees for the Past and Future, let us in the Present secure the records of the first for the instruction of the last."

I. A. LAPHAM,	Milwaukee,
WM. R. SMITH,	Mineral Point.
HENRY S. BAIRD,	Green Bay.
JAMES SUTHERLAND,	Janesville.
GEORGE GALE,	Galesville,
CHARLES DURKEE,	Kenosha,
G. W. HAZLETON,	Columbus,
LYMAN C. DRAPER,	Madison.
FRANK H. FIRMIN,	"
O. M. CONOVER,	"
DANIEL S. DURRIE,	"
H. S. ORTON,	"
SIMEON MILLS,	"
GEO. B. SMITH,	"
DAVID ATWOOD,	"
JAMES D. BUTLER,	"
GEORGE HYER,	"
HORACE RUBLEE,	"
JOHN Y. SMITH,	"
GEO. P. DELAPLAINE,	"
J. ALDER ELLIS,	"
F. G. TIBBITS,	"
C. B. CHAPMAN,	"
S. G. BENEDICT,	"
D. J. POWERS,	"
S. V. SHIPMAN,	"
JOHN D. GURNEY,	"
H. W. TENNEY,	"

Executive Committee.

MADISON, SEPT. 15, 1862.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



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